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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4588th meeting

Wednesday, 24 July 2002, 7 p.m.

New York

President:	Sir Jeremy Greenstock	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Franco
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 23 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/828).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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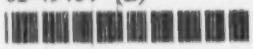

The meeting was called to order at 7.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 23 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/828)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Bahrain, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Jacob (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Buallay (Bahrain), Mr. Maquieira (Chile), Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Ms. Løj (Denmark), Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt), Mr. Nambiar (India), Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia), Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Al-Kadhe (Iraq), Mr. Motomura (Japan), Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan), Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia), Mr. Akram (Pakistan), Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Manis (Sudan), Mr. Ayari (Tunisia) and Mr. Al-Saidi (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 24 July 2002 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2002/830 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held today, Wednesday, 24 July 2002, regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the Council's provisional rules of procedure and with previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I should also like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 24 July 2002 from the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request that I be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda. In conformity with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 24 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2002/831 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request the Security Council to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to participate in the meeting of the Council to be held on Wednesday, 24 July 2002, on the situation on the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the rules of procedure and with previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council is meeting in response to the request contained in the letter dated 23 July 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, which is contained in document S/2002/828.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer of Palestine, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your assumption of the Council presidency for this month, and by wishing you every success in your work. Let me also take this opportunity to praise Ambassador Mikhail Wehbe for the way in which he conducted the work of the Security Council last month. Also, I would like to express our thanks to all Council members, and to you personally, Mr. President, for your speedy response to the Arab Group's request through its Chairman, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and for convening this important meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to commit and escalate war crimes and State terrorism against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. In the pre-dawn hours, Palestine time, yesterday, an F-16 warplane dropped a one-ton bomb on a three-story apartment building in northern Gaza City. That air strike killed 15 Palestinian civilians and wounded more than 150 people. Among those killed in the attack were 9 infants and children between the ages of two months and 13 years. In addition to the human devastation, the building that was hit, and at least four other homes, were destroyed, and several other nearby buildings sustained serious damage in the attack on this densely populated civilian neighbourhood.

Israel, the occupying Power, declared that this military attack was in fact carried out as a targeted killing. This repugnant practice of extrajudicial execution has been repeatedly condemned by the international community and constitutes a war crime. Yesterday, however, the occupying Power took this practice to a new, extreme level, as the occupying forces knowingly and deliberately killed innocent civilians — children, women and men, many belonging to the same family — in the attack, along with the targeted person, Mr. Salah Shehada. Clearly, there was no way that such a military strike would not cause such tragic results in terms of civilian deaths and injuries and physical destruction.

This Israeli assault represents the first blatant war crime committed by the Israeli occupying forces since the entry into force this month of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). This action definitely falls within the jurisdiction of the Court and, thus, measures to bring the perpetrators to justice should be taken. At the same time, this latest Israeli war crime was committed at a time when serious, and apparently succeeding, efforts were being undertaken to curb the violence and restore some cooperative measures between the two sides.

Obviously, the Israeli Prime Minister, the man of peace, Mr. Ariel Sharon, who labelled the crime as a "great success", is once more trying his utmost to prevent any progress towards restoring a meaningful, peaceful process. Mr. Sharon and his lieutenants must be held responsible for such actions and the ensuing results.

The aforementioned Israeli war crime comes after the recent demolition of the homes of families of suspected Palestinian suicide bombers, as well as a series of threats by Israeli officials to deport some or all of those family members. Such actual or threatened measures are illegal and are prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which is applicable to all of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Further, they represent a collective punishment as well as a war crime under international humanitarian law and the Statute of the ICC. Again, the international community is obligated to take measures against the perpetrators of these crimes.

All of this is happening while the Israeli occupying forces continue with their second wave of reoccupation of most Palestinian cities and population centres in the occupied West Bank, which has now continued for more than a month. Throughout this time, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians — actually the whole Palestinian population in those areas — have been subjected to round-the-clock curfews, confined to their homes and denied any aspect of normal daily life, including access to basic necessities, such as food and proper medical care. In other areas, closures and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods also remain in effect. The extent of human loss and physical destruction that has been caused, the continuous confinement of the people, and other Israeli collective punishment measures against the Palestinian people have led not only to socio-economic devastation but also to a real humanitarian crisis, for which the occupying Power must be held responsible.

Since September 2000, more than 1,705 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces in military attacks. This tragic figure does not include the hundreds of other Palestinians who have died as a result of other illegal practices being carried out by the occupying Power. Moreover, thousands of Palestinians have been injured, many seriously and permanently, by the occupying forces. Hundreds of homes have been destroyed, and thousands of people have been rendered homeless. Billions of dollars have been lost in Palestinian wages and other income.

Further, the Israeli military siege on the headquarters of President Yasser Arafat in the Palestinian city of Ramallah continues, in violation of all norms and logic. It essentially represents a direct attack on the leader and symbol of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. In addition, this siege continues to seriously obstruct the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to exercise its responsibilities and to rebuild itself.

All of the aforementioned is an escalation of the same Israeli military campaign against the Palestinian people that began with the infamous visit of Mr. Sharon to Al-Haram Al-Sharif on 28 September 2000. There was, as Council members will recall, another level of escalation prior to this recent period, which began on 29 March 2002, in response to which the Security Council adopted resolutions 1402 (2002), 1403 (2002) and 1405 (2002). Needless to say, Israel, the occupying Power, has not only not heeded those resolutions, but has now created an even graver situation on the ground. We believe that the Security Council has a clear responsibility vis-à-vis the situation, including the necessity for implementing the Council's own resolutions.

The Government of Mr. Ariel Sharon has been trying to portray its policies and practices as simply a response to the suicide bombings. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the Palestinian side has condemned this practice that has undermined the Palestinian national interest. In fact, what the Israeli Government has been doing is intended to serve clear political objectives, expressed repeatedly and publicly by Mr. Sharon. His aims have always been to drag us all back to a pre-Oslo situation and to destroy the Palestinian Authority, while inflicting maximum pain, suffering and loss on the Palestinian people. Only in that manner could he guarantee blocking any possibility of a serious peace settlement, so that the occupation and the colonization and settlement activities could continue.

Unfortunately, some on the international scene have been trying to avoid the realities and to avoid confronting Mr. Sharon. Thus came the search for solutions that would show a lot of motion, even without any real movement. The problem is that such an approach can only make matters worse. Obviously, avoiding the truth is not going to make it disappear.

At this time, some parties have decided to focus on the issue of reform of the Palestinian Authority, making this the central issue regarding the situation. While we believe that reform is in our national interest, we hope that this focus does not represent another

attempt to avoid the realities and divert attention from the imperative of confronting the illegal policies of the Israeli Government of Mr. Sharon.

Two clarifications are necessary on this issue. First, the current system of the Palestinian Authority has its limitations and deficiencies as a result of the Oslo negotiating process, and not as a result of a Palestinian choice. Secondly, any talk about restructuring reform or free elections, while important, remains meaningless while the Palestinian people are under Israeli occupation, let alone while Israeli tanks remain in the heart of Ramallah and while Israeli warplanes fly above Gaza.

We appreciate the established international consensus that has emerged on the two-State solution, and on the need for the establishment of the State of Palestine. Allow me in this regard to put forward some main Palestinian positions on the debate that is currently taking place. First, the internal Palestinian situation will always remain the domain of the Palestinian people themselves. We hope that no one is trying to give free and democratic elections a new meaning.

Secondly, any initiative or plans that would exempt the Israeli side, and particularly Mr. Sharon, from taking specific actions up front and from adopting different policies, would only provide cover for further destructive Israeli actions. Such initiatives would lead nowhere, and no one could even seriously believe in them.

Thirdly, we reiterate our belief regarding the need for a comprehensive approach. This does not only mean dealing with political, economic and security issues simultaneously; it also means agreeing from the beginning on the final outcome or the end game. Details, of course, would be left to the parties to negotiate, but the overall framework should be clear. We believe that the Security Council can and should play an important role in this regard.

Finally, with regard to the political aspect, let me also say that the Palestinian side believes that the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, is not subject to negotiation. Palestine should be established in that territory, with its borders based on the 1967 lines. We have already compromised more than our share, and any expansionist Israeli designs shall not be accepted. Needless to say, this position is also reflected in the Arab initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit, which was based on the initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

In all honesty, we feel that the international community needs to show more resolve and seriousness in dealing with the situation, whether on the ground or concerning the political aspect. The growing Israeli violations and crimes are suffocating, and indeed killing, any potential for peace between the two sides. This tragic situation is only being further exacerbated as the international community continues to stand idly by while the Israeli occupying forces continue to wreak devastation and destruction against the Palestinian people.

We will continue to cooperate with the "quartet" and with other interested parties, but we strongly believe in the need for decisive action, especially on the part of the Security Council, to prevent the worst from happening and, hopefully, to carry us forward to a different and better situation.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Israel, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): At the outset, Sir, allow me to say that we are pleased to see you presiding over the deliberations of the Security Council for the month of July.

In the pre-dawn hours yesterday morning, Israeli forces undertook military action as part of our ongoing effort to protect civilians from the unrelenting threat of Palestinian terrorism. The target of the attack was Salah Shehada, one of the most prolific and brutal terrorists in the history of the Middle East. Along with him, a second leading Hamas operative was killed.

To our great regret, 14 Palestinian civilians were also killed in the attack. Israel's leaders, including Prime Minister Sharon and Foreign Minister Peres, have expressed their deep regret at the deaths of civilians, particularly those of children, and at the injuries caused to many others. Our profound sympathies and condolences go to the friends and loved ones of those who were lost.

Yesterday's action was precipitated by the failure of the Palestinian Authority to respect its most basic obligation to prevent its territory from being used as a base for terrorist operations. As a consequence of that failure, hundreds of Israeli civilians have been killed, and thousands wounded, in scores of terrorist attacks carried out with the financial, logistical and moral

support of the Palestinian leadership, including Chairman Arafat himself. In such a climate, Israel has been left with no choice but to take action to protect our people from the threat posed by individuals like Salah Shehada.

Shehada was the military leader of the terrorist organization Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Although the Security Council has never met to discuss the attacks for which he is responsible, there is no shortage of them. Shehada masterminded countless terrorist massacres that resulted in the cold-blooded murder of hundreds of innocent Israelis and other nationals. Over 300 mortar attacks on Israeli towns and villages were carried out under his direction. As the deputy to the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Shehada was responsible for coordinating the activities of senior Hamas commanders in the West Bank, recruiting suicide bombers, drafting the group's attack policies, determining which Jewish communities to target, and helping Hamas enhance its arsenal of weapons. Shehada also had no compunction when it came to recruiting children to carry out attacks, as in April 2002 when he dispatched three Palestinian youths on a suicide mission to attack Israeli positions.

Shehada was also a figure who was well known to Palestinian security officials. On numerous occasions, Israel requested that he be arrested, but despite the Palestinian Authority being fully aware of his location and fully capable of bringing him to justice, this mass murderer remained a free man — free to roam the streets and plan further attacks against Israeli civilians, as he did most recently with the killing of five Israeli teenagers in the community of Atzmona.

Despite Shehada's long and bloody record of terrorism, and despite numerous requests by Israel that he be detained, the Palestinian Authority never lifted a finger to have him arrested. With Palestinian leadership refusing to do anything to impede the operations of a leading terrorist commander, Israel had no choice but to act.

In planning yesterday's operation, Israeli forces did not anticipate the extent of the collateral damage that would result from the air strike. This matter is now the subject of an investigation by Israeli authorities. Had we known the result beforehand, we would never have carried out the operation. Unlike the terrorists we have been forced to confront, Israeli commanders take no pleasure in the loss of innocent lives. We do not celebrate the deaths of the innocent as a military victory, as do our adversaries. Precautions are taken to ensure our operations entail as little harm as possible to the civilian population. Indeed, several previous attempts to target Mr. Shehada were called off after intelligence revealed that significant casualties would ensue.

In this instance, however, Israel's precautions failed to prevent these casualties, and our regret is sincere and profound. But the pain of these losses, however severe, does not obscure the fact that Palestinian terrorists continue, callously and in contravention of all accepted international norms, to situate themselves among civilians in order to use them as human shields. Hamas members not only fail to distinguish themselves from civilians, but deliberately hide among them to avoid retribution. Salah Shehada demonstrated no more concern for the lives of those who were close to him than he did for the hundreds of innocent Israelis whose lives he destroyed.

Responsibility also lies with the Palestinian Authority. It is the Palestinian Authority's chronic failure to do anything that might prevent future attacks against Israel that compelled us to act to protect our civilians from harm. Military actions would be entirely unnecessary if the Palestinian Authority were abiding by its signed commitment to root out terrorism from its territory.

But the Palestinian Authority has not acted, and it is not abiding by its commitment, so it falls to Israel to take the steps necessary to fight terrorism and clear the path back towards political negotiations. While we recognize that military actions cannot stop every potential attacker, Israel forces have been successful in thwarting scores of attempted terrorist bombings. Without these operations, the civilian death toll on both sides would surely have been far higher. Chairman Arafat has demonstrated in the past that when he wants to he can be remarkably successful at preventing acts of terror that emanate from the territory under his control. His security forces know where terrorists reside, where they hide, and where they maintain their bases of operations. What is missing is the necessary political will to act against them.

We are all aware of what can be accomplished in the absence of terrorism. We have seen the great lengths to which Israel was willing to go in the context of peaceful negotiations. At Camp David in July 2000,

Israel extended a far-reaching and comprehensive offer to the Palestinians. The Palestinian leadership not only did not reciprocate, but launched instead a long and bloody campaign of terrorism against the citizens of Israel, precisely at the moment that both sides were closer than they ever had been to reaching an agreement.

Despite the bloodshed and mistrust that now exist, we can return to the period of hope that existed prior to the onset of violence and terror in September 2000. Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), President Bush's statement, the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan collectively illustrate a way back from the abyss, predicated first and foremost on an end to violence and terror.

Israeli withdrawal is merely one component of what is intended to be a multifaceted package aimed at returning the parties to a political process. Israel has begun to implement measures aimed at improving the situation of the Palestinians and at rebuilding mutual trust, including the release of funds to the Palestinian Authority, issuing more work permits for Palestinian labourers and loosening restrictions on movement, all in an effort to ease the hardships facing the Palestinian population. Israeli and Palestinian officials have been meeting to discuss ways to move forward, and Israel for its part is fully committed to that constructive dialogue.

But the notion that Israeli withdrawal should occur in a vacuum, independently of any Palestinian action, clearly contravenes President Bush's landmark speech, endorsed by the "Quartet" statement and Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), all of which recognize that the Palestinian side also has clear obligations it must uphold so that we can ensure security for all and a resumption of a political dialogue. In that regard, the Security Council would not serve the interests of peace by focusing so intently on Israeli actions while ignoring the responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority. President Bush's speech set out a clear political horizon predicated on vital steps to be taken by both sides to ensure that progress is genuine and lasting.

In the absence of any steps by the Palestinian Authority to fight terrorism, Israel cannot be expected to take unilateral action that would drastically increase the risk to Israeli civilians. Such action has been shown to result directly in the increased loss of innocent life.

What is needed is for the Palestinian Authority to act, to relieve Israel of the burden of acting against terrorists hiding out in Palestinian territory. Israel still believes that there can be no military solution to the conflict. And even with all the hatred that has been aroused by the resort to violence, Israelis still believe that peace can be achieved and that compromises should be made, provided there is a genuine partner on the other side that is prepared to do its part.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am confident that your expertise and skill will lead the Council to the success for which we all hope. I should also like to express thanks and appreciation to my brother Mr. Mikhail Wehbe for the distinguished manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council last month. In addition, I should like to express to you, Mr. President, and to other Council members our appreciation for your quick response to our request to convene this open meeting to discuss the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories — a situation that has so seriously deteriorated because of Israel's occupation of nearly all the cities of the West Bank, its refusal to implement Security Council and other United Nations resolutions, and the fact that it has never really heeded those resolutions or taken them seriously, which has led to continued conflict and bloodshed.

The world followed the premeditated, deliberate Israeli shelling of a heavily populated residential quarter of Gaza City that claimed the lives of 15 persons — nine of whom were children — and injured more than 100 civilians, including women and children. No logic can justify this heinous crime that Israel has committed; it is a terrorist act that cannot be justified under any pretext. It is a heavy blow to all the efforts that have been undertaken to put an end to violence and to press the parties to the conflict to resume peace negotiations in order to restore peace and stability in the region.

Despite the international and regional efforts under way to end the violence and to create conditions conducive to the resumption of the peace process, despite the contacts between the Israeli and the

Palestinian parties to calm the situation, and despite the many declarations by a number of leaders of Palestinian forces expressing their readiness to end the suicide attacks, provided that Israel commit itself not to kill Palestinian civilians, the premeditated Israeli shelling of residential buildings in Gaza and the murder of their residents reflect Israel's unwillingness to calm the situation or to seek peace and stability. Israel's intransigence and its predetermined resolve to resort to a policy of excessive force — regardless of its catastrophic results and of the retribution and revenge associated with hatred — in the hope of sanctifying its occupation, has led to the exacerbation of the situation. Israel's insistence on occupying the Palestinian territories and on expanding its settlements there, its Judaization of the occupied Palestinian cities and the imposition of its laws and jurisdictions by force, contrary to resolutions of international legitimacy, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and failing to respect the Palestinian people's human rights, all confirm Israel's lack of seriousness with regard to bringing about peace with the Arabs.

Faced with the Israeli occupation and Israel's premeditated acts of murder — acts that Israel not only has admitted but apparently takes pride in; faced with the deliberate and systematic destruction and the siege imposed on the Palestinians, with summary detentions, the annexation of Palestinian territories, settlement expansion and the imposition of unjust laws, as well as attempts to erode the peace process; faced with continued despair and devastating frustration, with the international community's failure to compel Israel to submit to international legitimacy, with the Security Council's failure to force Israel to respect its resolutions or even to work to protect the Palestinian people so that Israel will end its assassinations, destruction, confiscation of land and siege; and faced with Israel's attempts to ignore all commitments and to circumvent all agreements; faced with all that, the Palestinians ask what their choices are. What is the value of the life of humiliation, deprivation and injustice that they endure? No one would accept the murder of innocent civilians, regardless of their nationality or religion. But violence cannot be ended by continuing the assassinations and the destruction and by erecting security barriers and ethnic shields.

History shows that official violence will only beget more violence, and that peace can be attained only in an environment conducive to the advancement of the peace process. There is no alternative to ending the occupation and to implementing the peace strategy based on the Madrid Conference and confirmed by the Saudi initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit. Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian territories that it has occupied since September 2000 would end the violence. Its withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 4 June 1967, and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, would bring about peace and stability.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns the heinous act of aggression perpetrated by the Israeli forces in Gaza. It also condemns all Israeli practices that ignore the most fundamental human rights. It calls upon the international community to shoulder its responsibility with regard to this grave situation, which threatens international peace and security, and to move immediately and resolutely to confront Israel with its responsibilities in conformity with relevant Security Council resolutions and international conventions. Israel must give up its policy of systematic violence and coercion, and must be compelled to work to bring about conditions conducive to peace.

The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is extremely critical in the light of its possible repercussions not only on the efforts for peace in the region but also on the peace and stability of the region as a whole. We cannot remain silent; we cannot accept such occurrences as commonplace in the occupied Palestinian territories. We cannot simply continue day after day to count the killed and wounded. This tragic situation requires that the international community — in particular the Security Council — act with determination and sincerity to avert the unpredictable dangers that threaten the region's future.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): Once again the Council is obliged to meet because of a tragic worsening of the situation in the Middle East. France and the European Union have strongly condemned the Israeli military action taken on 22 July in a densely populated area of the Gaza Strip. That attack resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries, including a number of children. France once again takes this opportunity to reaffirm, before the Security Council, this condemnation in the strongest possible terms. France wishes also to convey its profound distress and sympathy to the injured and to the families of the innocent victims.

While Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself against terrorism, such a deliberate act is unjustifiable and can in no way contribute to resolving the current crisis. As the Secretary-General has said, Israel has a legal and moral responsibility to avoid the loss of innocent lives. In its response to terrorism, it must refrain from having recourse to this kind of indiscriminate operation. More generally, Israel must put an end to extra-judicial executions, of which civilians are all too often the victims. France recalls the need to respect in all circumstances the norms of international humanitarian law.

At a time when certain signs, such as the reopening of Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem or the resumption of direct contacts between Israeli and Palestinian officials, had given us some grounds for hope that tensions would ease and that there would be a return to dialogue, the action undertaken in Gaza threatens to restart the cycle of violence. France has constantly pressed this point: violence will not lead to a solution. It cannot be an option for those Palestinians and Israelis who wish to establish a just and lasting peace between their two peoples. It is only through dialogue that the two parties will succeed in providing decent living conditions for their peoples, while realizing their legitimate aspirations to live in two States — Israel and Palestine — coexisting side by side within secure and recognized borders.

France once again calls on both parties to refrain from any further act of violence, the sole effect of which would be to provoke further ones. It calls on each party to continue efforts to bring about a lasting resumption of dialogue. This is the objective that the main actors concerned aim to achieve within the "quartet". Its encouraging work has underscored the need to work hand in hand on all the issues — political, institutional, security-related, economic and humanitarian. This is the only possible path to a just and lasting settlement. It is today essential for the Israelis and the Palestinians to renounce violence once and for all and to commit themselves to that path with the assistance of the whole of the international community.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Ireland associates itself with the statement that will be made later in the present meeting by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the member States of the European Union.

Today's meeting takes place in the shadow of a further act of gross brutality and disregard for human life, of a kind which increasingly characterizes the situation in the Middle East.

As Ireland's Foreign Minister stated yesterday, we fully accept the right of Israel to defend itself and to take necessary measures against those who plan or execute terrorist attacks. We reiterate here again our utter condemnation of such attacks on Israeli civilians. Our hearts go out when we see the bodies of innocents torn apart in this way.

However, as Foreign Minister Cowen stated, yesterday's attack in Gaza was not a reasoned or proportionate response to the threat of terrorism. The use of air-launched, high-calibre missiles in densely populated areas can only result in large-scale civilian casualties. To suggest anything otherwise is disingenuous.

The political and military leadership of a Member State of this Organization that decided upon yesterday's action in Gaza are fully familiar both with the destructive capacity of the ordnance used and the high density of civilian habitation in the precise location that was targeted.

It behoves none of us to temper our outright condemnation of such actions.

We extend our deepest condolences to the families of the innocent victims of yesterday's attack and our profound sympathy to the many injured.

There is no military solution to this conflict. It can be resolved only through dialogue and renewed negotiation, with appropriate international support. This international support can best be offered on the basis of the steps identified in successive statements of the "quartet", including the statement issued after the recent meeting in New York.

There must in our view be parallel progress on the political, security, humanitarian and institution-building tracks. This progress must lead to a two-State solution through the establishment of a Palestinian State within the three-year period mentioned by the "quartet". Clearly defined steps will be needed to make this goal a reality within the time frame.

As the "quartet" stated on 2 May of this year, we believe that an international conference should be convened as soon as is feasible to give structure to the

ongoing effort towards the objective set by the "quartet": that is, a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the entire Middle East conflict.

It is a harsh reality that Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories has had appalling consequences for the Palestinian population. This situation has been developing rapidly into a humanitarian catastrophe. As the occupying Power, Israel cannot shrug off its responsibility for this catastrophe.

We welcome the proposed release by Israel of a small part of the revenues due to the Palestinian Authority and the re-admittance of a small number of Palestinian workers to employment in Israel, but much, much more needs to be done.

The international community can play a crucial part in relieving the suffering of the Palestinian people caused by the closures. But this should not be seen as a substitute for substantive, meaningful action on the political and economic tracks.

Palestinian reform of institutions and security services must continue with international support as well as the necessary support of the Government of Israel, as outlined in the "quartet" statement. However, neither can progress on Palestinian reform be seen as a substitute for advances on the political and economic tracks.

Ireland believes that the parameters for a settlement to the Middle East conflict were well described by the European Council in Seville on 21 June of this year:

> "A settlement can be achieved through negotiation, and only through negotiation. The objective is an end to the occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties. The end result should be two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbours. In this context, a fair solution should be found to the complex issue of Jerusalem, and a just, viable and agreed solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees."

This view is echoed in the most recent "quartet" statement and also finds support in the comprehensive peace initiative advanced by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and endorsed by the Summit Meeting of the League of Arab States in Beirut in March of this year.

The Palestinian and Israeli peoples are both suffering grievously from the present cycle of retaliatory violence. Leadership is required on all sides to break this vicious circle. Ireland appeals for no retaliation to yesterday's action and for no further actions of violence. No more innocent lives should be sacrificed in a conflict that neither side — let me stress, neither side — can win.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Several people, including children, were killed in the attack on an apartment building in Gaza only two days ago. Norway strongly regrets the loss of the lives of children and other innocent civilians. Norway calls on Israel to stop its attacks on civilian Palestinian targets.

Norway has no sympathy for terrorists. Terrorist acts of violence are a serious obstacle to peace in the Middle East and must be stopped. Norway once again calls upon everyone with any influence within the Palestinian Authority to prevent terrorist attacks.

We have expressed understanding for Israel's security concerns, but we cannot accept Israeli actions that are in conflict with important principles of international law and that only serve to exacerbate the conflict. Norway has repeatedly made it clear to the Israeli authorities that we strongly deplore the extrajudicial liquidation of suspected terrorists. Suspects must be tried in a court of law in accordance with the principles of the rule of law.

The Israeli attack came after representatives from both sides had reported progress in the negotiations of the past weekend. We hope that the attack will not obstruct the political progress and urgently call on the parties not to allow this attack to destroy the progress made over the weekend. Norway once again calls upon both parties to act responsibly and to demonstrate the leadership necessary to bring an end to the vicious cycle of violence. They must continue their efforts to restore confidence and clear the way for a political solution to the conflict.

Norway welcomes the outcome of recent meetings within the frameworks of the "quartet" and of the Task Force on Palestinian Reform. International structures are being streamlined and strengthened. Norway will do its utmost in working with partners

within the Task Force on Palestinian Reform as well as with members of the "quartet". The international community must respond positively and publicly to genuine reform measures that are undertaken. Such a public display of support will be of great importance in consolidating the reform process and in strengthening reform-oriented forces in the eyes of the Palestinian public. The mobilization of financial and technical support from the international community is urgently required. At this critical juncture, our readiness to react rapidly is essential. We must avoid delays, which in the current situation could be very costly politically.

Israel must do its share to facilitate the reform process. Israel must cease closures, lift curfews, release all Palestinian revenues and facilitate donor projects. Without an Israeli commitment to assist to the best of its ability, the reform process will fail. The result — the further radicalization of Palestinian society — will increase the threat to Israel's security.

The Palestinians, the Israelis and the international community must continue their efforts to restore confidence and open the way for a political solution to the conflict.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is very seriously concerned about the air strike made by the Israeli armed forces during the night of 22 to 23 July on an apartment building in Gaza, in which 12 people were killed, including several women and children, and in which more than 100 were wounded. We are particularly alarmed by the fact that the action was carried out against the backdrop of a renewed dialogue on questions of security between officials of Israel and of the Palestinian Authority. Such incidents, without question, undermine the efforts of the international community to break the impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, to ease tension in the Middle East overall and to create an environment for a renewal of the peace process.

We vigorously reject any form of terror and firmly condemn terrorist acts. At the same time, we consider unacceptable the practice of extrajudicial retaliations, especially since their victims are civilians, including women and children, as was the case in the recent Israeli strikes. That type of action does not resolve the challenge of ensuring Israeli security and can only help instigate a new round of violence. We are convinced that, together with effective Palestinian efforts to eliminate terrorist attacks, Israel must abandon the aforementioned practices.

Russia vigorously appeals to both parties to the conflict to show restraint and composure and to avoid acts of force which could enable the extremist forces to take the initiative, once again setting in motion a series of events of confrontation and mutual hatred. Simultaneously with an agreed decision on questions of security and the fight against terrorism, it is essential to find a way forward in other key areas: the reform of the Palestinian Authority and a resumption of the political process.

In this context, there is a vital need for accommodation on the part of Israel, such as by unfreezing financial assets destined for the Palestinian Authority, lifting the restrictions on Palestinian movement, reducing the number of roadblocks and withdrawing Israeli troops from Palestinian towns. Those steps could do a great deal to curb the activity of extremist groups and to prevent the actions of suicide bombers.

Russia is firm in its view that Security Council resolutions adopted in recent months contain the requisite political and legal basis both for lessening confrontation and for initiating movement towards a final settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We believe that it is essential for us to focus our efforts on implementing decisions already adopted, especially since a broad-based international and regional consensus has been forged on the fundamental parameters for that effort.

For its part, Russia, together with the other members of the "quartet" of international mediators and other interested parties, will continue to make active efforts to break the impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to proceed to a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Mauritius condemns in the most serious terms the recent attack perpetrated by Israeli forces on civilian targets in Palestine. Mauritius has on various occasions condemned the use of excessive and disproportionate force by Israel on unarmed Palestinians and innocent civilians. Mauritius has equally condemned all acts of terror on the part of Palestinian suicide bombers. But we have always pointed out that retaliatory measures by Israel were unlikely to put an end to suicide bombings. On the contrary, they would incite further reactions and

embroil the region in a spiral of violence. Yesterday's attack in the area of Yarmuk in the northern Gaza Strip claimed the lives of 15 Palestinians — the majority of whom are innocent civilians, including infants and children — and wounded more than 150 civilians. There has been unanimous condemnation of this attack around the world, and even by the President and Cabinet ministers of the Israeli Government. Mauritius would like to present its condolences to the families of the innocent civilians killed in the attack.

Mauritius believes that the use of F-16 aircraft to launch missiles against civilian targets cannot be tolerated. A matter of still greater concern is the fact that the attack took place at a time when security officials from both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides were working very seriously to curb violence and restore cooperative security arrangements. It also came at a time when Hamas leaders had declared that Hamas was going to put an end to all terrorist acts. In the circumstances, the Israeli action is not at all conducive to peace and reconciliation. In fact, it has the potential of creating more anger, more frustration and, hence, more violence among the Palestinians.

Mauritius looks forward to the investigation that has been announced by the representative of Israel on this air strike, and we hope that it will focus on why an F-16 warplane was allowed to drop a bomb in a crowded residential area. We believe that Israel must take full responsibility for this heinous act and take remedial measures.

While Mauritius understands Israel's concerns with respect to terrorist acts perpetrated against its civilians, we must emphasize that, as a State and under international humanitarian law, Israel has the responsibility to take necessary measures to avoid the loss of innocent civilians lives in any action against terrorism. Indeed, we believe that Israel must commit itself to ensuring that such acts are not repeated.

Not later than last week, the Security Council welcomed the positive efforts of the "quartet" and the international community to look for a just and durable solution to the Middle East problem. The plan, which includes the vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side within secure boundaries, presented a road map for a definitive solution to the Middle East problem. That is very likely to suffer a serious setback unless renewed commitment is made by both parties to genuine and constructive dialogue, culminating in the fulfilment of the objective, with the assistance of the international community.

For this to happen, Israel must immediately withdraw to the pre-September position and ease internal closures to allow people to enjoy their rights and freedom of movement. It is unacceptable that more than 800,000 Palestinians have been kept under continuous curfew for more than a month now. We call on Israel to stop all new settlement activity and to refrain from constructing the new security fence. We equally call on Israel to put an end to its attempt to prevent Palestinian militants from entering the West Bank, as such collective punitive measures are neither legitimate nor acceptable.

On the Palestinian side, we call upon the militants to put an end to all terrorist attacks, especially those targeting Israeli civilians. More importantly, we appeal to the Palestinians not to take any retaliatory measures following the Israeli attack. Both sides must exercise extreme restraint if peace is to be achieved.

I would like to conclude my statement by making a special appeal to the international community to provide, as a matter of extreme urgency, all assistance needed in order to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation faced by the Palestinians. The damage to infrastructure, combined with a collapse of economic activities, has placed the Palestinian population in the most severe situation, to the extent that even the Israeli Prime Minister has recognized the need for them to be given humanitarian assistance. We hope that at the conclusion of this meeting, we will be able to adopt a decision along those lines.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Never before has a serious development in the Palestinian situation demanded such international concern and such a response as the premeditated and meticulously planned Israeli act of aggression on a residential building in the crowded Al-Daraj quarter, in northern Gaza City, carried out at midnight on Monday. That act of aggression resulted in the deaths of more than 15 martyrs and the injury of 150 people, as a result of laser-guided and missile shelling from an F-16 aircraft.

Even Israel's sympathizers have deplored and rejected this act. No logic can justify what occurred, let alone the motives behind it. We, who have long been familiar with Israeli terrorist policies and have suffered their aftermath for more than half a century, know all

too well Israel's goals in planning its policies and defining its objectives and ambitions.

Many Israelis described the aerial missile attack on a residential quarter in the north of Gaza City as a war crime, in the real sense of the word, in the context of international humanitarian law. That description was given by Israelis. Some went so far as to say that it was a real act of State terrorism. Many world leaders described the Israeli aggression as senseless, flagrant, brutal and unjustified. They said that it would exacerbate the conflict. They also said that Israel's use of the most lethal modern weapons and missile and laser attacks against Palestinian civilians and their property cannot be tolerated. The most modern fighter jets were used in the attack.

Many world leaders called for immediate and decisive action to put an end to brutal Israeli acts of aggression. They also called on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility to protect the Palestinian people, on the grounds that such aggression reflects the Israeli Government's clear rejection of peace and of efforts to achieve it.

We cannot fail to respond to the images of dozens of body parts strewn everywhere, body parts of Palestinian children and women amid the tears of the tens of thousands of Palestinian citizens carrying the bodies of their brothers and sons to their resting places; to images of infants killed in the attack — some younger than two months — being carried to their graves. Even *The New York Times* carried a photograph of a father carrying the body of his little girl on its front page.

Amidst the protests of the leaders and peoples of the world, the Israeli Prime Minister very clearly and unambiguously made no secret of his real intentions. At a meeting of the Israeli Cabinet he proudly stated that this operation had been one of the most successful ones launched by the Israeli army in recent times. Was that not the same declaration relayed by all media outlets? Did not that statement reflect pleasure and sadism at the killing of innocent people, particularly children?

The Syrian Arab Republic was very clear in defining its view of the situation in the Middle East region, namely, that the situation has deteriorated in recent years as a result of the way in which Israeli policies and practices have contradicted the aspirations of the international community and of all those who believe in reaching a just and comprehensive peace. Syria has affirmed that successive Israeli leaders have used every pretext and means to circumvent the requirements of the peace process, particularly those relative to Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories — including the Syrian Golan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem — to the 4 June 1967 borders, as well as from occupied Lebanese territory. Had Israel been serious about, and truly interested in, achieving peace in the region on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) in particular, the Madrid terms of reference, and the principle of land for peace — which was reaffirmed by the "quartet" in its last communiqué — we would not have had to waste our time, efforts and means. But Israel has persisted in continuing its occupation and annexing more land, at the expense of the rights of the Arab people.

Since 1948, Israel has committed one massacre after another; this is not the first massacre against the Palestinian people. Israel justifies its actions by employing all sorts of unfounded linguistic ploys. At times it justifies its actions under the pretext of self-defence, at others under the pretext of fighting violence and terrorism. It has been proven that when it committed the recent massacre at Jenin and destroyed hundreds of houses in that camp, Israel was pursuing a systematic policy of destruction in a show of senseless force, for the sole purpose of preventing the Palestinian people from exercising their rights to self-determination and to establish their State on their land, continuing its occupation of that land and maintaining its grip over the illegal Israeli settlements, policies which are rejected by the international community. The current attack yet again confirms that policy of terror, killing and destruction. We have surely not yet seen the end of attacks on northern Gaza, as such attacks have been an ongoing pattern of Israel's policy over the years.

The war against international terrorism will be severely damaged if we are complacent about Israel's premeditated terror and believe the lies of Israel's leaders when they say that the carnage perpetrated against the defenceless Palestinian people is an act of self-defence. That lie cannot be accepted by anyone. Israel, which is heavily armed with nuclear weapons and every sort of weapon of mass destruction, is capable of defending itself in any circumstances should

it decide to withdraw to the lines it held prior to 4 June 1967.

The new carnage, among whose 15 victims 9 were children, provides yet another incentive for the Security Council, the United Nations system, international law and all States of the world to bring all possible pressure to bear upon Israel in order to hold it responsible under international humanitarian law, as well as to make it respect the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949. Israel's crimes in Gaza, Jenin, Deir Yassin, Khan Younis and Kibya, the assassination of Egyptian soldiers by burying them alive, and the massacres at Sabra and Shatila are crimes in a series of crimes against humanity. They were not acts against terrorism. The international community should not take such crimes lightly, for they threaten the ethical norms, international laws and legal instruments that we have all long respected.

The Syrian Arab Republic strongly denounces this senseless crime, this carnage. We support action by the Council to strongly condemn the massacre committed by Israel in Gaza. We would hope that doing so would deter Israel from continuing its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people. The Council should call upon Israel to lift the stifling and barbaric siege that has been imposed on hundreds of thousands of Palestinians for over a month, which threatens to cause a human catastrophe of unknown dimensions. Israel should also be called upon to end its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people, as well as the liquidation of Palestinians under the pretext of fighting terrorism. The policies of Israel have become all too well known to the world. Are we going to allow Israel to remain above the law? Can Mr. Sharon and his Minister for Defence, who planned and oversaw the execution of this and other massacres, remain out of the reach of the International Criminal Court?

Security in the Middle East will not be enjoyed by anyone in the region unless there is just and comprehensive peace. Bringing about peace and security and ending the occupation of all the occupied territories are the only way to guarantee an end to the violence.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Singapore deplores in the strongest terms all acts of violence and terror that target civilians, and we call for an end to extreme acts by both sides. The latest Israeli attack in a residential area in Gaza, resulting in the death and injury of innocent Palestinian civilians, is not only highly regrettable in itself, but will also have the ill-timed effect of potentially rolling back the positive movement generated by recent concerted international efforts.

We agree with the characterization made by several world leaders, including the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, Mr. Jack Straw, who said that the attack was unacceptable and counterproductive. We join the Secretary-General in calling on the Government of Israel to halt such actions and to conduct itself in a manner that is fully consistent with international humanitarian law.

Israel has the right and, in fact, the responsibility to protect its own civilians from terrorist attacks. However, we understand that the Palestinian Authority, with the support of regional players, has been working with Palestinian groups to put a stop to the suicide bombings and other acts of terror against the Israeli population. The recent Israeli attack undercuts such efforts and undermines Israel's legitimate right to defend itself from terror. It is also, of course, counterproductive to international efforts to find just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

One wrong act does not justify another. We take this opportunity to appeal to the Palestinians to exercise maximum restraint in this critical phase, and we call on both parties to maintain their stated support for a negotiated settlement. We also urge the Palestinian Authority to continue to work with all Palestinian groups to stop all acts of terror, which have been widely recognized as undermining the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to statehood. We note that Ambassador Al-Kidwa reiterated in his statement today that

> "Indeed, the Palestinian side has condemned this practice [of suicide bombings] that has undermined the Palestinian national interest".

The current situation clearly demands the continued and sustained engagement of the Security Council. In this regard, we are pleased that the Council has responded promptly to the request by the Arab Group in convening this open debate, which, we hope, will defuse the situation on the ground. We hope that the Palestinian people will take comfort in the fact that we all share their outrage.

The Security Council should continue to find ways to implement its own resolutions. Singapore believes that the best way of addressing the situation is through implementation of relevant Council resolutions, including 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). Non-implementation of its resolutions weakens the Council's authority, including its ability to ensure full compliance with its other resolutions.

Ultimately, the resolution of the Middle East problem is contingent on achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace agreement and the normalization of relations within countries in the region. We hope that the international community will not be held hostage by the actions of extremists on both sides who are determined to disrupt the peace process.

Preparations for the proposed international conference must begin soon in order to make substantive progress towards the vision outlined in resolution 1397 (2002) with definite timelines. This should build on relevant Council resolutions; and existing peace agreements and understandings, including the negotiations at Camp David in the year 2000; and the subsequent discussions at Taba, as well as the Tenet Work Plan, the Mitchell Report and the Arab peace initiative. It is important for the international conference to address the issues of security, peace and economic distress in parallel.

We also hope that the Secretary-General's idea for the deployment of an impartial, robust and credible multinational force, which could create a secure environment and the political space to allow the comprehensive strategic framework to take root, will not be forgotten. Only by adopting such a comprehensive framework can the security needs of Israel and the political aspirations of the Palestinian people be addressed simultaneously.

In order to achieve the comprehensive solution that we all support, we need a strong diplomatic vehicle to drive the process. Given the difficult political terrain of the Middle East, we believe that the "quartet" may provide the strong four-wheel-drive diplomatic vehicle that is needed. Here we welcome in particular the latest joint statement by the "quartet", issued only 11 days ago on 16 July. It has an important paragraph that I would like to quote:

> "Consistent with President Bush's June 24 statement, the UN, EU and Russia express their strong support for the goal of achieving a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement which, with intensive effort on security and reform by all, could be reached within three years from now. The UN, EU and Russia welcome President Bush's commitment to active U. S. leadership toward that goal. The 'Quartet' remains committed to implementing the vision of two states, Israel and an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as affirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 1397." (*S/PRST/2002/20, annex*)

When Council members met in informal consultations two days later to discuss, and then endorse, the statement by the "quartet", there was considerable interest in the three-year time frame that it established. We now hope that the "quartet" will take the next steps and spell out the specific time lines and target that have to be met to achieve this three-year goal.

Mr. Franco (Colombia)(*spoke in Spanish*): We are gratified that this open debate has been convened to assess recent events in the Middle East. It is with great sorrow that we take the floor today to record our most vigorous condemnation of the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians.

The attack perpetrated by Israel in Gaza amounts to an unacceptable extrajudicial killing that has caused indiscriminate deaths among civilians, including children, and undercuts the emerging possibilities for a political process. This act deserves full and emphatic condemnation. This condemnation has been expressed by the international community, including the United Nations.

Israel's attack could not have taken place at a worse political moment. There appeared to be positive signs that might have served to halt the cycle of violence and terrorism of recent months. We trusted that it would be possible to re-establish cooperation machinery in the area of security. We heard encouraging announcements about the real possibility of ending the suicide attacks. We supported the collective efforts of the "quartet" and of each of its members to develop a political process that would secure the backing of other States of the region.

However, following the military attack in Gaza, there is now the feeling that the situation might well grow out of all proportion. As never before, we are

duty-bound to make a collective and individual contribution within our own possibilities to prevent the situation from degenerating into an uncontrolled spiral of violence.

In this respect, we wish to state once again that we respect Israel's right to provide for its own security. We condemn the acts of terrorism that have been systematically committed on its territory, and which have affected the lives and the physical integrity of its citizens. While we say this, we wish also to state that we fail to understand how a military attack, in a densely populated area of Gaza, contributes either to Israel's security or to the peace efforts to which a number of international political actors are committed.

These difficult times should be turned into opportunities. We make an anguished appeal to revive the chances of a comprehensive solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, a solution that would include not only security aspects but also other vital issues, such as the economic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, the withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Palestinian territories, and the creation of the Palestine State.

At this critical moment, we must more than ever be mindful of our common objective of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace throughout the region on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and the principle of land for peace.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): The United States believes that both Israelis and Palestinians must do all they can to end the violence in the Middle East and create an environment in which progress towards peace and security for all is possible. President Bush has set forth our goal of a future where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders. The Security Council endorsed this vision in resolution 1397 (2002), which passed with nearly unanimous support earlier this year. And President Bush believes that with intensive effort on security and reform by all, this goal could be reached within three years.

This meeting has been called to discuss the Israeli action of 23 July. However, we must also address the actions of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other Palestinian terrorist groups which seek to destroy the prospects for Palestinians achieving their goal of an independent State. Their attacks against Israeli civilians included two deadly attacks just last week. Those attacks are morally repugnant, and are rightfully of serious concern to the entire international community. We should question why they are not more often a focus of Council attention.

We should also be mindful of the responsibility of each and every United Nations Member State, particularly those on the Security Council, to cease providing safe haven to Palestinian groups that, "finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts" (*resolution 1373 (2001), para. 2*). We call for immediate and full compliance with the Security Council's decision in resolution 1373 (2001) in that regard.

The United States is concerned about some Israeli tactics and actions, including targeted killings and actions that endanger innocent civilians. We have urged Israel to consider the consequences of actions such as these. President Bush made clear that the heavy-handed action Israel took on 23 July did not serve the cause of peace. He further expressed his concern about the strike's toll on civilian lives. We have made his concerns known directly to the Israeli Government.

I would like to review efforts currently under way by the United States, in partnership with the Secretary-General and others in the international community, to improve the situation. We are currently working hard to advance the plans of action on Palestinian civil reform and security, to address the critical humanitarian situation in Palestinian areas, and to restore a political dialogue. Our meeting, last week, with the "quartet" and Arab Foreign Ministers were very useful in this regard. We will continue to consult closely with the parties, the "quartet" and Arab leaders regarding how best to move forward.

Both sides need to work to end violence and terrorist attacks. The United States is leading efforts, with the active involvement of key Arab States, to restructure Palestinian security services and restore security cooperation. Regarding Palestinian civil reform, we have welcomed and encouraged the already strong Palestinian support for reform, including the Palestinians' own 100-day reform programme. The International Task Force is working to develop a comprehensive plan for civil reform. We look forward to its next meeting in late August.

We are extremely concerned about the dire humanitarian situation faced by the Palestinians. The

United States has contributed more than $180 million in assistance this year through the United States Agency for International Development and through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Movement on civil reform and security would allow the international donor community to do even more.

Israel has an important role to play in taking steps to facilitate access for humanitarian relief. We are also urging Israel to take steps to try to restore economic activity in the Palestinian areas. As we move forward on civil and security reform, Israeli steps, such as easing closures and releasing frozen tax revenues, in addition to facilitating movement of humanitarian goods and services, will be critical to creating an environment in which progress is possible.

The Security Council has provided clear direction regarding the road ahead to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, most notably in resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). It has called unambiguously for a cessation of all acts of violence. It has welcomed the efforts of the "quartet" and has endorsed two joint statements by the "quartet" members.

We share the view expressed here this evening by other delegations that resolutions and statements already adopted by the Security Council form a more than adequate basis to guide efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the Middle East question. We believe that the international community's focus at this time should be on constructive diplomatic efforts, working directly with the two parties on the ground to realize the two-State solution that we all seek.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico expressed yesterday, and it reiterates today, its most vigorous condemnation of the Israeli army's aerial attack on 23 July in Gaza, which resulted tragically in the loss of many innocent civilian lives and more than a hundred injured, mostly women and children. Israel has gained nothing by this action, nor has it avoided or prevented anything. On other occasions Mexico has just as strongly repudiated the terrorist acts committed by Palestinian groups in Israel in which innocent civilians, including children, also died. My country deplores the continued acts of terror and reprisal which inflict unspeakable suffering on the civilian population and scar present and future generations through the horrors and the scourge of war.

In reaffirming our most profound dismay at the vicious circle of violence in which Middle East is trapped, we endorse the appeal of the Secretary-General to the effect that the parties should immediately take all necessary measures to restore security conditions for the civilian population, in both Israel and Palestine. Mexico concurs with the joint statement of the "quartet" that emphasizes the urgent need to address the humanitarian situation in Palestine. We appeal again to the parties to refrain from resorting to practices contrary to international humanitarian law and urge them to comply fully with the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, of 1949.

The acts of violence, reprisal and mutual provocation we deplore today are happening at the same time as endeavours are being made to restore the bilateral dialogue and promote international initiatives to find a long-term substantive solution to the problem.

Mexico believes that military actions as well as terrorist attacks generate greater violence in the Middle East and undermine the valuable initiatives and tireless efforts of the international community to get the peace process started again and end the conflict. We call on the parties to comply, without delay, with the provisions of resolution 1397 (2002), whereby the Security Council called for immediate cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terrorism, provocation, incitement and destruction.

A lasting peace process in the region must take into account, simultaneously, the various aspects of the conflict. Political negotiations, security arrangements, implementation of an immediate humanitarian assistance plan and building of Palestinian institutions should be the most important elements in building the desired peace.

We reaffirm support for increasing the efforts of the international community to restart the peace process in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We reaffirm our support for the concept of a region in which two States, Israel and Palestine, would live side by side within secure and recognized borders, as provided for in resolution 1397 (2002).

Mr. Chungong (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the end of our 18 July 2002 meeting, the Council unanimously decided, inter alia, to condemn violence in the Middle East, including in Palestine, after the

Emmanuel suicide bombing and its consequences. We hoped then that the appeal of the international community calling for reason and restraint would finally be heard by the parties to the conflict.

Recent events in Gaza dealt a regrettable blow to this hope. The logic of violence seems to have built its nest in the Middle East conflict. Blind violence on both sides continues to create despair and cause the death of innocent victims. Our duty in the Security Council, and as Member States of the United Nations, is to overcome this violent trend through the logic of peace.

The progress made in talks to restart the peace process must not be called into question by the slipping in one camp or another. My delegation recalls that dialogue and negotiation are the only way to peace. Violence can only breed violence.

In these circumstances, how can one approve of the latest Israeli raid in which Palestinian civilians, mostly children, found their death? What can justify such an act, which can hardly contribute to peace?

We call Israel and Palestine to reason and dialogue. For some time we have seen tiny movements in that direction. Although dialogue is still fragile, we call on the parties to commit themselves more to this opening and to the future. It is easier to use the logic of exclusivity and violence and remain alone, rather than join together with others. But this kind of logic, based on a simple power relationship, is precarious and dangerous and will take the people of the region further from the only solution encompassing a true vision of the future.

My delegation fully subscribes to any initiative which will bring about a dialogue and negotiations and whose final objective would be to realize a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Finally, Cameroon feels the intense suffering of the Palestinian people, and we again express our sympathy for them.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Israeli armed forces dropped a laser-guided bomb on a Palestinian residential area, causing many civilian casualties, among them women and children. The Chinese Government strongly condemned the atrocity, which killed innocent people, committed by Israeli forces in violation of international humanitarian law. This new Israeli military action represents a vicious development in the violent conflict between Palestine and Israel, and it has seriously hampered the international community's efforts to find a solution to the Middle East question.

The Chinese Government believes that the crux of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, lies in Israel's prolonged and renewed illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. In order once and for all to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, end the cycle of violence and achieve peace in the Middle East, Israel must abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions and immediately withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories. We also appeal to the Palestinian side to exercise restraint and to curb violence, including suicide bombings, so as to avoid further complicating the situation.

The escalation of violence between Israel and Palestine in recent days further demonstrates that the international community, including the Security Council, needs to step up its efforts and to take practical measures and actions to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Only when the ultimate goals of the peace process — and the effective means of achieving those goals — are in sight can there be mutual trust and confidence. Only then can extremists who have blind faith in violence be isolated, and only then can the vision of the peaceful coexistence of two independent States — Israel and Palestine — be transformed into real action on the part of the majorities in Israel and Palestine to put an end to decades of turmoil, violence and terror.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): As a country associated with the European Union, Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement that will be made shortly by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union.

The cycle of violence in the Middle East continues without respite. Last week, two terrorist attacks caused civilian deaths. On 23 July, an Israeli missile hit a building in a densely populated area of Gaza City. Civilians, including children, died. The sight of children's corpses, torn apart, is intolerable. Bulgaria rises forcefully in opposition to the loss of innocent civilian lives, in particular those of children.

We make a solemn appeal to both parties to respect the lives of the most vulnerable — namely, children.

Bulgaria fully recognizes Israel's right to prevent terrorist attacks on its territory and on its citizens. However, the latest attack, carried out with such force, was unacceptable and counterproductive. We deeply deplore the loss of human life that it caused.

Much has been said about the unacceptable character of terrorism, including terrorism in the Middle East. I need add nothing to that. There is an urgent need to put an end to the situation that feeds such terrorism. I am thinking primarily of the very grave humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian population. It is very important that that situation be improved so as to isolate within Palestinian society the terrorists and those who glorify them.

The international community has found ways and means to act together in favour of peace in the Middle East. Bulgaria unreservedly supports the ministerial statement made by the "quartet" when it met in New York on 16 July. It is fully in line with resolutions adopted by the Council, which laid out the path towards a solution to the Middle East conflict. Only by implementing the Council's resolutions will a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict be found.

One important element of the international community's recent endeavours has been the attention rightly paid to efforts to give greater legitimacy and representativity to the Palestinian Authority. Only democracy can resolve the Palestinians' problems, and we fully support the efforts being undertaken in that regard.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm Bulgaria's position, which has been expressed on a number of occasions and which is reflected in resolution 1397 (2002), which my country not only supported but also helped to formulate, since Bulgaria is a Council member. Only when Palestinians and Israelis believe in the possibility of living side by side, within secure and recognized borders, will the Middle East peace process truly be able to extricate itself from this cycle of unacceptable violence. It is very important that the parties to the conflict not be seduced by the temptation to retaliate to acts of violence. In the current situation, we fear that may happen.

We hope to see a continuation of the modest signs of resumed dialogue that have been observed in recent days in the context of ministerial contacts between Israelis and Palestinians.

Bulgaria will continue to strive, within the Council and bilaterally, to bring about an end to the violence in the Middle East.

Mr. Boubacar Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): This public meeting is being held at a particularly critical time, when the Middle East region is once again going through a very dangerous and uncertain period of turbulence. The events of the past few days provide ample proof of this.

We have just seen the Israeli army use combat aircraft under the pretext of eliminating a senior official of Hamas accused of terrorist acts. That disproportionate reaction led to the death of innocent civilians, most of them children, in additional to considerable material damage.

Israel certainly has the right to ensure the security of its people. However, it must be recognized that the excessive use of force is totally counterproductive and can lead only to the opposite of the desired result — that is to say, an exacerbation of the violence.

This is all the more worrisome because tangible signs of improvement in the situation had been seen. President Arafat had undertaken the reorganization of Palestinian security services, and negotiations were under way with Hamas officials to reduce tension. All of this attests to the fact that there is a determination on the part of the Palestinian side to take the actions that are necessary to resume dialogue with the Israeli authorities. The resumption of contacts between the Palestinian and Israeli security services was part of this ongoing process.

In addition, my delegation would like to recall that the meeting of the "quartet" held on 16 July in New York with the participation of high-level representatives of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan came out staunchly in support of a definitive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a three-year time frame, leading to two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

These initiatives, which follow on the heels of many others, attest to the fact that the international community, far from sitting idly by, is resolved to put an end to the suffering, which has gone on for far too long.

Against this backdrop, we must once again send a strong signal to the protagonists, so that they will understand that the only honourable way out is mutual acceptance and the establishment of a climate of trust conducive to a negotiated peace based on compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The President: I shall now make some remarks in my capacity as representative of the United Kingdom.

The statement to be made later by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union will set out the overall policy to which the United Kingdom Government subscribes.

Violence again seems to have gained the upper hand in the Middle East. As the British Foreign Secretary told the House of Commons on 23 July, the Israeli air strike on Gaza City which resulted in 15 deaths and over 100 injuries was unacceptable. It was also counterproductive.

Mr. Straw said that he recognized and understood Israel's need to take action against suspected suicide bombers and their accomplices. Israel was entitled to take steps to protect itself from terrorist attack, but those steps should be neither disproportionate nor excessive.

The United Kingdom also believes that Israel has obligations which it must respect under international law, including international humanitarian law. Action taken in self-defence must be proportionate. Israel must avoid civilian casualties and avoid damaging civilian property and infrastructure.

I should be clear that all acts of violence, including by Palestinians, which indiscriminately target civilians are completely unacceptable. They are never justified under any circumstances or by any explanation. We also condemn the practice of extrajudicial killings.

The United Kingdom extends its sympathies to all those from both communities who have lost family members.

Ordinary Israelis and Palestinians deserve peace and security. Violence will not provide the answer. Peace and security can be achieved only by negotiations. The United Kingdom will continue to work at every level and to explore every avenue to get that process going again.

It is important that both sides now focus their efforts on creating the conditions necessary for a resumption of negotiations. Negotiations to secure a unilateral Palestinian de-escalation have been ongoing for some time, and the United Kingdom has followed them closely as part of our determination to help end the cycle of violence and to restart the political process.

We hope that, despite the acts of violence this week, those negotiations will not falter. Indeed, the very point of holding this debate now is to contribute to efforts to preserve the chances of progress in negotiations.

Both parties should respond to the challenges in President Bush's statement and in the statement by the "quartet" of 16 July, which the Council supported, with the goal of a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement within three years. The Palestinians must conduct security, political and economic reform with an action plan agreed by the "quartet" on 10 July, leading to a Palestinian State committed to combating terror. The United Kingdom stands ready to help with that.

Israel must take immediate and concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable Palestinian State, including easing restrictions, withdrawing to pre-28 September 2000 positions, releasing tax revenues, freezing settlement activity and allowing free, immediate access for international humanitarian personnel to alleviate the worsening humanitarian situation in the occupied territories.

As set out by European leaders at Seville last month, our vision of the solution is an end to the occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties. The two States should be capable of living side by side within secure and recognized borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbours.

We shall need to see a fair solution to the complex issue of Jerusalem and a just, viable and agreed solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

There is now a remarkable degree of agreement internationally about this vision. We are in close touch with the United States, our European Union colleagues and the parties about the way forward, and we will

continue to do all we can to help the parties break the cycle of violence and restart political negotiations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express the appreciation of the delegation of Egypt for your presidency of the Council this month. We are confident that the Council is in the best of hands, with your well-known wisdom and statesmanship.

The Security Council is meeting today as the Palestinian people — indeed the Arab people and the peoples of the rest of the civilized world — mourn the children and other innocent Palestinians who fell victim to the Israeli aggression of 23 July, when an Israeli air force warplane bombed an apartment building in the Yarmuk neighbourhood in Gaza, leading to the death of 15 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and the injury of 150 others. That barbaric aggression is but one in the series of war crimes perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people.

Some time ago, we witnessed the crime of Jenin, and today we witness the tragedy of Yarmuk. Those acts demonstrate before the world's eyes Israel's contempt for international resolutions, for the norms of international humanitarian law and for its responsibilities as an occupying Power. The targeting of a residential area leaves no room for doubt that the Israeli occupying forces knew in advance that the victims would be civilians. The international community cannot consider the Israeli aggression on the morning of 23 July to be an act of self-defence, as Israel claims. No civilized human being can accept that hollow pretext to justify an act that falls squarely on the list of war crimes to which the international community must respond by pursuing and holding accountable both the planners and the perpetrators.

It is noteworthy that the brutal attack took place when there were signs of an imminent announcement of an agreement between the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas leadership on ending all attacks that might harm Israeli civilians. It is also noteworthy that the aggression took place less than a week after the meeting of the "quartet" in New York. The members of the "quartet" had expressed their intention to seek a final settlement with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), thus ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. This Israeli crime most regrettably confirms our belief that the Israeli Government wishes to dynamite any chance of peace in the Middle East and that it will not hesitate to use the most base and brutal means to cripple the efforts for peace or to suffocate the Palestinian territories and the livelihood of the Palestinian people.

It is now the duty of the international community to intervene promptly and effectively to protect the Palestinian people and to maintain what hope remains of achieving peace in the Middle East.

The delegation of Egypt calls on the Security Council to seriously examine and implement the Secretary-General's proposal for an international presence in the Palestinian territories to ensure an end to the violence against the Palestinian people and the Israeli withdrawal to the borders before 28 September 2000.

We call on Israel to immediately respond to the efforts of the international community and of the "quartet" to reach a just and lasting settlement based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), and on the Madrid Conference terms of reference.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Chile. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to commend you, Sir, for your brilliant conduct of the presidency of the Security Council this month and to express my thanks for your initiative of holding this open debate on a conflict whose developments and implications cannot, as we see it, allow any indifference.

The Government of Chile emphatically reiterates its rejection of the disproportionate use of force and of all acts of terrorism and violence against the innocent civilian population of either party, whatever its origin or justification. In this context, Chile condemns the recent Israeli air strike in Gaza, which took 15 innocent lives, nine of them children's, leaving sorrow and discouragement in its wake, at a time when the representatives of the two peoples are working very

seriously to reduce violence and to restore security agreements. We wish to convey our deep condolences to the families of the dead and injured. Such acts not only undermine the mutual confidence that the international community is trying to restore between the parties but are also an attack on fundamental human principles.

Chile associates itself with the majority voice of the international community, which firmly repudiates and calls for the immediate cessation of the spiral of violence in a conflict which has no military solution. The prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people prompts us once again to reaffirm the need for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the mandate of the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace. Likewise, we highlight the vital role of the Palestinian Authority, which is still a legitimate and indispensable party in the peace process.

The excessive use of force, the demolition of houses and restrictions on movement, in addition to policies of internal closures, curfews, targeted killings and the deportation of families, serve only to intensify the suffering of the Palestinian people and to undermine their capacity for economic recovery, thus making hopes for peace even more remote. The occupation must end and give way to the peaceful coexistence of two independent States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders.

My country is concerned by the grave humanitarian situation to which the Israeli occupation of Palestinian cities and camps has led. The situation has also had environmental repercussions such as land degradation and damage to water resources. Chile also concurs with the view of the international majority, which demands the end of all Israeli settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan. Those activities not only lead to the destruction of houses and property in order to establish and expand such settlements; they also restrict the freedom of movement of the Palestinians, deprive them of agricultural land and destroy the territorial integrity of that people.

We view with satisfaction the prospect of an international conference to address the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question. My country encourages the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to restore the basic minimum conditions of mutual respect necessary so that their participation in negotiations can begin again in conditions of equality. Chile recognizes and values the dedicated efforts of the international community and, most particularly, of the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the "quartet". The conclusions of the "quartet" at their recent New York meeting on 16 July refresh our hopes for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Prince Zeid Ra`ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this emergency meeting to discuss the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We regret having had to witness the Israeli Government's recent escalation of events at a time when the international community is trying to maintain the momentum of the progress made in the past few weeks, in order to advance the peace process. The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan expresses its condemnation of and dismay at the latest Israeli aggression in Gaza, which caused the death of 15 and the injury of more than 150. That act is a flagrant violation of the principles of international humanitarian law.

I will not be giving away any secrets if I recall the difficult circumstances under which the Palestinian leadership is living, the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people under siege, closures and the strict curfew imposed on them by the occupying forces. The Palestinians under occupation have never felt secure; nor have they lived normal lives that we all live. Mistrust, humiliation and fear have been the defining elements of the people of Palestine for more than 35 years.

Israel continues to commit war crimes against Palestinian civilians. It undertakes internationally condemned extrajudicial assassinations. It deliberately uses excessive force and imposes collective punishment against the Palestinian people. Such acts further exacerbate the security, economic and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. Israel's approach undoubtedly is on a crash course with the aspirations of the other peoples of the region to live

in peace and security. It is regrettable that Israel has never understood the instability from which the Palestinian and the Arab region suffer.

Instead of correcting the stark shortcomings and pursuing an integrated approach that addresses the root causes of the crisis, Israel has preferred to resort to the excessive use of force. The Security Council has thus far been unable to take any steps to bring about Israel's compliance with its resolutions, let alone convince it of the need to do so.

I wish to stress my Government's position with regard to the need for all parties to commit themselves to the "quartet" communiqué issued in New York and to the progress achieved in the political process over the past few weeks. We renew our support for the ideas and the positive vision included in the June statement of President Bush of the United States with regard to the declaration of a Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders and the establishment of two States living side by side in peace.

We reaffirm once again our commitment to the Arab initiative, based on the principle of land for peace and on security based on a serious comprehensive solution, in return for Israel's implementation of all its international commitments, beginning with its withdrawal from the Palestinian territories that have been reoccupied since September 2000, and including an end to the expansion of settlements and the building of new ones.

The terms of reference for the peace process are clear. They frame a political vision that will allow us to achieve a final solution between Israel and the Palestinians. The time has come for all parties to act in accordance with their commitments to the peace process, to realize the objective of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the principles of international legitimacy represented in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

While Jordan reaffirms its condemnation of all suicide attacks against civilians in Israel, it calls on the Israelis to work with us to achieve peace, recognizing that the protracted conflict and the high toll among innocent civilians on both sides will not bring about the desired result. How many more Palestinian and Israeli victims must there be before Israel realizes that the military solution will not lead to peace? The political option is the only genuine way to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In conclusion, the Jordanian Government calls on the Security Council to assume its responsibility with regard to Israel's deliberate and systematic acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and to provide it with the necessary protection under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the rules of international humanitarian law.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Bahrain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure to see our friend the United Kingdom presiding over the Security Council this month. I also express our deep appreciation for Syria's presidency of the Council last month.

The night before last, the Israeli Defence Force added yet another link to the chain of the excessive use of force against the Palestinian people, in the form of an air raid against an apartment building, which led to the death of its civilian inhabitants, including infants. The attack was made by a warplane carrying a missile. That image would paint the picture of a country in a state of war. At this point, we must recall, as others have, the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. This is a matter that Israel must take into consideration.

As we condemn violence and terrorism in all their forms, we must express our opposition to the disproportionate use of force, which makes it difficult to differentiate between civilians and combatants. Such Israeli action will not bring peace to the region, but will rather lead to deterioration and crisis. Such acts clearly demonstrate that the current Israeli Government does not want the peace process to move forward and does not want to give it a chance to succeed, particularly as these acts come in the wake of the New York meeting of the "quartet", which had been preceded by the Arab initiative, which has been welcomed by the majority of States all over the world.

The Israeli occupying forces' acts of murder and terror against civilians run counter to the most fundamental laws and international humanitarian norms. They also violate international conventions and all the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. As

we have done in the past in this Chamber, we call upon the Security Council to live up to its mandated responsibility. We say this because events in the occupied Arab territories will have negative repercussions for international peace and security. We also call on the Council to provide protection to the defenceless Palestinian people, who merely wish to live in peace and tranquillity on their land.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Denmark. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

The European Union deeply regrets last week's violent developments in the region and is concerned about their possible consequences. We strongly condemn any military action directed indiscriminately against civilian residential areas, whether Palestinian or Israeli. There can be no justification for the missile attack carried out by the Israeli air force in a residential area of Gaza, which left a high number of individuals, including children, dead or injured. The European Union and the international community at large have consistently rejected the Israeli practice of extrajudicial killings. Neither this nor any other action causing indiscriminate civilian casualties will bring security to the Israeli public.

The European Union also reiterates in the strongest possible terms its condemnation of the recent terrorist acts against Israeli civilians. We note that the Palestinian Authority condemns such actions, and we renew our call on the Palestinian Authority to make every possible effort in the struggle against terrorism. The European Union expresses its most sincere condolences to the bereaved families, as well as its wishes for recovery to those injured by these cruel attacks.

Military and violent actions only serve to breed more hatred and to undermine the attempts by the parties and by the international community to bring about reconciliation and a negotiated end to the conflict.

The ministerial "quartet" met here in New York just last week. The meeting confirmed the role of the "quartet" as a key coordination forum for international efforts to bring about a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis. The subsequent discussions of the members of the "quartet" with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Jordan and Egypt contributed to ensuring close coordination between the "quartet" and key players among the Arab States. The "quartet" agreed on important elements for progress towards a settlement of the Middle East crisis.

The European Union stressed in particular the need for parallel progress on political, economic and security issues; the need for immediate improvement in the humanitarian and social situation; the holding of free and fair elections; and the convening of an international ministerial meeting at the appropriate time. We also underlined the necessity of drawing up a road map towards the goal of achieving a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement within three years, with two States living side by side in peace and security. Moreover, the European Union remains of the view that the current efforts to reform the Palestinian Authority are key to preparing it for statehood and can, provided that Israel takes the necessary steps to allow the reform efforts to go forward, play an important confidence-building role and pave the way for the resumption of political negotiations. The recently resumed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on establishing a comprehensive ceasefire and allowing the reform efforts to go forward signified the positive will of the parties concerned to work towards achieving that goal.

We urge the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to do everything in their power to restore safety and security for their populations. We also call on the parties to exercise restraint, to prevent an escalation of violence and to resume negotiations. The European Union will continue to work with our partners in the "quartet" and in the Arab world, as well as with the international community at large, towards achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Israeli regime, in pursuit of its bloody campaign and its racist and aggressive policy, is employing more vicious measures against the defenceless Palestinian people. It has once again reacted excessively and disproportionately in the occupied territories, killing and injuring dozens of civilians. The human toll from Israeli air strikes against a residential area of Gaza, launched from an F-16 fighter jet, was the most devastating suffered by Palestinian civilians in a single attack in almost two years. It is totally unacceptable to claim that the criminals who planned the attack did not know about the presence of a large number of civilians in the neighbourhood, including women and children. What the Israelis did yesterday was clearly a war crime. The international community should react accordingly, and bring the perpetrators of that crime to justice.

A criminal act was committed in the wake of some political developments in the occupied territories. Familiar with the pattern of actions, and aware of the possible reactions, the Zionist officials authorized this air strike knowing that it would disrupt any efforts that might increase pressure on the Israeli regime to end the occupation of the West Bank. What they did yesterday fits into the pattern of previous actions by the Israelis aimed at interrupting any calm in the region by trying to provoke the Palestinians. We believe that the recent escalation of violence in the occupied territories should be seen from this perspective, and the Israeli regime should be held fully responsible for the start-up of a possible new cycle of violence.

There should be no doubt that the Israeli campaign of targeting residential areas and the extrajudicial killing of Palestinians on the basis of hit lists are flagrant violations of the key tenets of natural justice and international humanitarian law. The words and deeds of the Israeli leadership have made it obvious that resorting to such acts has become part of the regime's policy. It amounts to organized acts of terrorism by a regime, and the international community should not turn a blind eye to it. It is very unfortunate that the very few Governments that criticize the Palestinians and hold them responsible for the ongoing violence in the area ignore the crimes perpetrated by the Israelis and do nothing to stop them.

There should be no doubt that occupation lies at the centre of the Palestinian conflict and the overall tension and instability in the Middle East. The shocking developments of the past two years have brought into closer focus the fact that unless the principal cause of conflict is effectively addressed, the crisis will never subside. Therefore the right of the Palestinian people to resist Israeli aggression and occupation is a legitimate one and is ensured by international laws and conventions. We reject the contention that Israeli aggression is an act of self-defense.

The international community in general and the Islamic world in particular are deeply concerned at the unceasing atrocities committed by Israeli armed forces. Israel's latest act is undoubtedly likely to further exacerbate the Middle East crisis, unless the international community and the United Nations intervene to stop its brutal campaign against the Palestinian civilians.

There is no doubt that the Security Council in particular is expected to act appropriately, with a view to putting an end to these violations by the occupying Power and for paving the way to bring those responsible to justice. So many times in the past, the Council was called upon to shoulder its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the inhuman and aggressive acts of the Israeli regime. Regrettably, the exercise or threat of exercise of the veto has so far prevented the Council from discharging its constitutional responsibility in such a crucial issue and has thus raised profound international disappointment. Without a doubt, the Council's inaction emboldens Israel to defy the wishes of the international community.

Recent events have further demonstrated the need for the Council to establish an international intervention, protection and observer force, with a view to protecting defenceless Palestinian civilians from ever-increasing atrocities at the hands of Israelis.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, it is a pleasure to see you presiding over the Security Council this month.

Two days ago, in the dead of night, a missile carrying a powerful bomb was launched in Gaza by Israeli aircraft with foreknowledge that this would result in large civilian casualties. The United States spokesman is reported to have said "The missile launched was a deliberate attack on the site, knowing that innocents would be lost." Fourteen innocent civilians died, including nine children.

Terrorism has been defined by some as the deliberate use of violence against innocent civilians. By this yardstick this Israeli attack was an act of terrorism, not least because it was planned and perpetrated, not by a fanatical group, but by a so-called democratic Government. Violence breeds violence. State terrorism inevitably breeds terrorism.

We welcome the universal condemnation of this abhorrent act. We welcome in particular the statement issued by the United States, on behalf of President Bush, against this heavy-handed action. We express our condolences to the families of all the victims.

The Security Council must take strong action against such acts of unbridled violence. No State should be allowed to entertain the expectation that it enjoys immunity, that it can perpetrate violations of international humanitarian law with impunity merely because it justifies them as being aimed against so-called terrorists. We must counter the widespread perception of double standards and multiple morality.

Over the past several months, the fruits of decades of peace endeavours have been trampled by unbridled Israeli violence, collective punishment and the slaughter of innocents in the Middle East. This brutal and ill-timed attack threatens the high-level diplomacy that was so recently resumed to build peace in the region. We must not allow this brutal act to prevent the realization of a just and durable peace there.

The Security Council and the international community must continue to call for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories reoccupied in recent weeks, for an end to all violence, to the economic strangulation of the Palestinians and to the paralysis in the process of reaching a just peace. We must continue to promote a durable solution on the basis of the principle of land for peace contained in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and so vividly reflected in the bold proposal of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and in the Beirut Declaration of the Arab States, as well as in the recent declarations by President Bush and the "quartet" meeting.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of July. We are confident that your wisdom and skills will lead us to the desired success. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for successfully conducting the duties of the presidency last month.

Yesterday at midnight, while people were going to bed, Sharon gave his orders to drop a one-ton bomb on a residential building, killing 15, including 9 children, and injuring about 170. Sharon prided himself on this ugly action, saying that it is one of his most important successes. What happened in Gaza is by all standards a flagrant violation of international laws, a war crime and State terrorism.

This comes at a time when the Israeli occupation forces claimed that they do not target civilians and a few hours after news stated that the Palestinian Authority presented the Israeli authorities with a plan for a ceasefire between the two parties, on condition that Israel stops killing Palestinian activists. This also occurs at a delicate time when intensive international and Arab efforts are being deployed to defuse the situation in order to resume the peace process. It is thus clear that Israel in reality seeks violence and the exacerbation of the situation and seeks to erode any attempt to realize permanent and comprehensive peace that would lead to the establishment of the Palestinian State.

The condemnation of this flagrant Israeli aggression is not enough, especially since Israeli practices are continuing, practices that target civilians, extrajudicial assassinations, expulsions of families and the destruction of homes. This means continuation of violence and instability in the region. It may thus usher

dire consequences into the whole area. These actions require the Security Council to act promptly and decisively, as it must assume its full responsibilities for providing international protection for the Palestinian people suffering under the occupation.

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States calls attention to the fact that this last Israeli aggression presents a real defiance of the efforts of the "quartet", which tries to bring the region back to the political course, and of the Arab efforts to restore peace in the region. No one, afterward, will have the right to ask about the reasons for the continuing violence in the area, or why the international and Arab efforts are not succeeding in ushering peace to the region.

There is no doubt that the Israeli military actions in the Palestinian occupied territories have reached a stage that reflects a dangerous deterioration in the prospects for peace in the region, an acceptance of the de facto situation whereby Israel tries to impose its own policy without paying any attention to the attempts of the international community to defuse the tension. This represents a flagrant violation of the international will, represented in this Council, and a threat to international peace and security.

The international community is unanimous on the need for reaching a peace based on comprehensive justice and on the resolutions of the United Nations, in addition to the principle of land for peace which took root in Madrid. Furthermore, it has given its support to the Arab initiative, which was reflected in the last Arab Summit in Beirut. This initiative states that the Arabs are ready to establish normal relations with Israel if Israel withdraws from the Arab land occupied in 1967. The initiative also calls for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Nonetheless, Israel rejected this initiative, emphasizing its intention to go against the wishes of the countries of the region.

The Security Council is requested today to address send a clear message to Israel, stating that the policies of aggression, which it is pursuing through violence, do not achieve peace or security in the region. Furthermore, the withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories and the return to the borders of 4 June 1967 are the beginning of the road to peace and security.

The Security Council is also requested to take the necessary measures that would assure the Palestinians that they are not alone in facing the brutal Israeli occupation. The League of Arab States emphasizes that peace is its strategic choice, and that it remains committed to cooperate with this Organization, led by the honourable Security Council, in order to achieve the peace which all the Arabs believe in and which is an international goal for all people, so that it is achieved with justice in the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Kadhe (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having responded so quickly by holding this meeting to consider the terrorist and criminal actions committed by the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people. We believe that your swift reaction was prompted by the circumstances of this horrible crime two days ago by the Zionist entity in Gaza, which targeted a civilian area. It was a crime in which an F-16 warplane dropped a 500-kilogram bomb.

We have already said, on earlier occasions related to the same agenda item, that Iraq is a little perplexed when the Security Council does not do anything to address the terrorist actions by the Zionist entity. These actions are clearly a flagrant violation of the Charter and a threat to international peace and security. It is only when the Arab countries and other well-meaning groups request it that the Council considers such issues.

Today, we ask the same question and we draw attention to this discriminatory approach by the Council towards the Palestinian issue. We know, like others, the reasons that lead the Council to take this unjust approach. We also know why the Council has double standards in this respect. It goes without saying, today, that everybody knows that this all goes back to a policy of child-spoiling followed by the United States with regard to the actions of the Zionist entity. This is the case because of well-known internal American reasons.

This spoiled child was encouraged to increase its aggressive and terrorist activities in order to terrorize the Palestinian people, so that the latter will accept humiliating and defeatist policies. In this instance, we mention that the reaction of the major Powers to the recent crime in Gaza was inadequate, and rather weak.

Everybody witnessed the crime committed by the Zionist military forces in Gaza on Monday 23 July 2002, on a direct order by the war criminal Sharon. This was designed to cause the largest possible number

of civilian casualties. The first indications show that there were over 190 dead and wounded, including a large number of children and women.

Do the Palestinian people not have the right to defend themselves by all possible means against this barbarous crime, in order to survive? How can the Security Council describe legitimate fedayee actions, carried out in accordance with international law and many resolutions of the United Nations, as terrorist acts? Palestinian fedayee acts are a legitimate right, a way to achieve liberation, independence and legitimate self-defence against the Zionist military machine.

The United States is the paramount military power in the world today and accordingly has a historic responsibility with regard to official terrorism, anarchism and war. The United States also has a historic responsibility towards international law and a significant historic responsibility with regard to falsification and distortion of political and legal situations and facts.

The United States is using its military and media powers for its own narrow ends. We are all aware that falsification and distortion of the facts and attempts to mislead derive from the worldwide Zionist movement, which is characterized by racism and egotism that surpass nazism. In fact, the movement is interested only in its own aims and has no consideration for other people. It is a movement that grows and prospers under conditions of terrorism, war and instability.

This policy in force in the world today, a policy of falsification and distortion of facts and inaccurate description of legal principles, has led to the following situation.

First, the United States is using international terrorism to cause the Security Council to adopt resolutions suiting its own political interests, under the pretext of preserving international peace and security. Secondly, peoples are being deprived of their right to self-determination by characterizing their legitimate actions as terrorist acts. This is what is happening today in Palestine. Indeed, although the Zionist entity is occupying Palestinian territory, the United States Government and the Zionist entity are trying to distort the facts, trying to show the victim as the aggressor and the aggressor as the victim.

Thirdly, acts of aggression by certain States are legitimized under the pretext of self-defence and preventive deterrent policies. Fourthly, many fixed rules of international law and international humanitarian law are being questioned. An attempt is being made to create new international legal rules that have no objective basis, and there is an attempt to impose them on international relations by using military and media powers to that end.

Fifthly, the United States invokes the pretext of international terrorism to carry out its own strategic goals in the world by using force, threatening force, stating explicitly that it will intervene in the internal affairs of States and that it wishes to change the political, social and economic regimes of States. Proof of this is the continually reiterated intentions of the United States Administration to change the legitimate regime in Iraq and to launch military aggression against it. It has also stated its intention of changing the legitimate leaders of Palestine.

Sixthly, under the pretext of maintaining international peace and security and combating terrorism, there have been violations of the fourth Geneva Convention *relative to the Protection of* Civilian Persons in Time of War, and of the third Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

Since the Zionist entity was established it has continually committed crimes of war and crimes against humanity in Palestine. Today the Council is called upon to act under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, to take coercive action against that entity and to protect the Palestinian people. If it fails to do so, it means that the Council is unable to maintain international peace and security, unable to discharge the mandate entrusted to it under the Charter. If the Council is unable to act appropriately, then the entire United Nations would lose credibility and the Council would have confirmed that the United Nations is simply an instrument of American and Zionist policy.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East. The Government of Japan deplores the Israeli air strike in Gaza City on 23 July, which resulted in many civilian casualties, including children. We express our deep condolences to the bereaved families and heartfelt

sympathy to those injured. This latest attack by the Israeli defence forces has intensified hatred among Palestinian people towards Israel and exacerbated an already desperate situation.

It is particularly regrettable that this action was undertaken at a time when the international community is making concerted efforts to end violence and bring peace to the region. The Japanese Government again urges both the Israelis and the Palestinians to break the vicious cycle of violence. We urge Israel, in particular, to exercise maximum self restraint.

This tragic incident underscores the urgent need to push the peace process forward in order to realize the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, as affirmed by Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). It is essential that the two parties, with the support and assistance of the international community, make every possible effort to achieve this goal.

The Government of Japan, for its part, is prepared to play an active role in various aspects of the process, including in the new international task force on Palestinian reform.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Manis (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Mr. President, to commend the manner in which you are conducting the work of the Council for this month. We also wish to commend Ambassador Mikhail Wehbe of Syria for the competent manner in which he accomplished his task during the previous month.

The Security Council meets once again to consider developments in the occupied Palestinian territories which have deteriorated to such a point that the Council is called upon to take the necessary measures in conformity with the Charter to guarantee peace and security, which have never been violated to such an extent as in the Palestinian territories today.

It was our hope that this Chamber would have been adequately equipped so that each and all could follow the heartbreaking and sad images that we have followed on television over the past two days. It was our hope that instead of listening to these statements, we would watch pictures that would expose the nature of the war crimes that Israel, the occupying Power, is committing with impunity, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Indeed, calling what happened in Gaza a war crime is the least that any conscientious human being would do, for any dictionaries or lexicons would fail to have words that would reflect the horror of the actions of Israel, the occupying Power, and its barbarous bombardment that targeted and killed the most vulnerable groups among civilians: infants, young children and their mothers.

The entire world condemned this heinous crime. This is a sincere reflection of the international community, whose patience is running thin faced with the contempt on the part of Israel, the occupying Power, for international law and international norms. However, we believe that such collective condemnation, despite its importance, must be coupled with effective actions that would deter Israeli aggression and preserve the security of innocent civilians and their basic rights as stipulated in all relevant conventions.

What we witnessed today — Israeli contempt for international law and disregard for the lives of innocent civilians, including women and children — is indeed unprecedented in history. It is an exceptional case that causes us to wonder. It is our belief that the sense of protection and immunity that the Government of Israel feels, despite all its activities, only makes it more brazen in challenging the international community and in committing more such acts. It is time that a courageous and bold initiative be taken to put an end to this unjustified protection of Israel and to hold Israel accountable to all international laws.

My delegation urges Council members to respond constructively, in accordance with international law, norms and practices. We call on it to assume its responsibilities as stipulated in the Charter and to take the necessary measures to promote justice and hold the aggressor accountable.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent debate of the Council to discuss the current grave situation in Palestine.

Like many others, my delegation condemns in the strongest terms the ruthless attack in Gaza City on Monday, 22 July, that killed 14 or, according to some

press reports, 15 Palestinians and wounded some 150 others. The well-planned and meticulously executed attack by the Israeli defence force, using a fighter aircraft on a heavily populated residential area, cannot be justified no matter how hard Israel tries to do so, including here in the Council today. Indeed, the first words of Mr. Sharon, who proudly described the attack and its deadly outcome as "one of our major successes", belie the subsequent unconvincing attempt by Israeli officials to explain away the incident in the wake of strong condemnations by the international community.

The killing and maiming of so many civilians, including women and children, in the Gaza attack was a heinous and indeed terrorist act, and was the latest of the many atrocities committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. It makes a mockery of Israel's sincerity and commitment to the search for peace in the region. The attack, using a highly sophisticated war machine — the devastating, deadly F-16 — on a densely inhabited civilian residential area, lowers depths to which Israel has descended in its policy of tit-for-tat and of meting out collective punishment on the Palestinian people.

This mindless and brutal act, in pursuit of the elusive goal of ensuring total security for Israel while maintaining its occupation and expanding illegal settlement activities, tarnishes even further Israel's image as a so-called civilized country. No peace-loving country, including my own, condones violence, particularly against innocent civilians. But, as we all know, violence begets violence, which is what the Israeli leadership seems to be bent on doing.

Israel's use of massive and unmitigated force is illegal and immoral and is a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Israel's reckless killing of civilians in the midst of efforts of the "quartet" to bring peace and the genuine efforts of the Palestinian Authority to cooperate in that respect, in spite of its many constraints, as we all know, is most uncalled for. Where is the sense of proportionality in Israel's action? It makes a mockery of the recent call by Mr. Sharon for a worldwide humanitarian operation to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people. Israel's action speaks for itself. It gives a hollow ring to the Israeli Government's claim of wanting to resolve the conflict and makes one wonder if the latest action stemmed from motivations other than peace.

We hope that the Council will not find it difficult or inconvenient to condemn this latest atrocity and to demand that Israel adhere to well-established principles of international law and humanitarian law, which should govern its conduct as the occupying Power. In the wake of this latest attack, and in the light of the mounting toll in lives and limbs in both communities over the past two years, Malaysia reiterates its earlier proposal to the Council that a United Nations or international peacekeeping or monitoring force be dispatched to the area. That call was made by many other delegations as well. We are fully convinced that, if it had been acted upon, the Council would certainly have been able to save the lives and limbs of so many innocent people on both sides.

It is high time that the Council take definitive measures to ensure the implementation of its resolutions, particularly resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). Clearly, the responsibility of implementing its own resolutions lies with the Council itself. That is a heavy burden, but it is one that must be borne by the Council.

My delegation welcomes the efforts of the "quartet" and encourages it to intensify its work. We are encouraged by the commitment, coupled with concrete actions, to realize the vision of Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security — as affirmed in resolution 1397 (2002) — within three years. However, we hope that everything will be done to ensure that the measures proposed to achieve that goal are fulfilled in equal measure by both Israel and Palestine. In the search for lasting peace, the onus should not be heavier on one side than on the other.

In conclusion, let me say that it is now the conventional wisdom that a Palestinian State will come into being at some point in time. But how many more lives must be lost, limbs torn apart, houses and property demolished, livelihoods destroyed and hopes and dreams of a people dashed before the international community and its influential members will finally bring themselves to declare that enough is enough and bring Israel to heel?

There is no need for us to reinvent the wheel. The principles and bases of a just, comprehensive peace are well known to all and are already on the table. What is needed is for all concerned, in particular Israel, to find the wisdom and to muster the political will to get on with the business at hand.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the exemplary way in which you have been conducting the work of the Council during the month of July. I am grateful to you, as well as to the other members of the Council, for having once again given me the opportunity to address the Council in my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

We have repeatedly shared with the members of the Security Council our opinion that the parties — the Israelis and the Palestinians — by themselves can never extricate themselves from their deep-seated conflict. Lamentably, the Council has not acted firmly to implement a plan to realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within recognized borders. International efforts to date, laudable as they may be, have been too modest and piecemeal.

A three-year programme for the establishment of a Palestinian State, introduced by President Bush in his speech of 24 June, gave no details as to the steps that will lead us to that stated goal. It also emphasized the party with the least resources, the Palestinians, by calling on them to end suicide bombings and to impose radical national reforms, while placing no concrete demands on Israel to end the occupation.

The recent "quartet" meeting in New York correctly referred to the need to make parallel progress on the political, economic and security tracks, and it expressed concern over the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians. However, a concrete plan for implementing the vision of two States remains elusive.

The Palestinians have earnestly embarked on a process of reform, as recognized even by Israeli Cabinet members who recently met with Palestinian ministers. The Palestinian activist leaders extended their hands in peace, so that Israel would withdraw from the occupied territory and cease its illegal practices. However, what was Israel's response? It continues the reoccupation of the majority of West Bank towns, the stifling closures, the arbitrary detentions and killings, the settlement activities, the attacks on the Palestinian leadership and the destruction of the physical and institutional infrastructure in the occupied territories. Moreover, last week, in a frank violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, it destroyed the homes of suspected Palestinian militants, imprisoned their relatives and threatened to deport them from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, in a flagrant example of illegal collective punishment.

As if that were not enough, in a hideous display of what could be described only as State terrorism, it carried out this latest attack on a densely populated area of Gaza City, which resulted in the death of 17 persons, mainly innocent women and children, while supposedly targeting only one senior Hamas activist. All of this is unacceptable, and it must be clearly condemned by the entire international community and its representative organs, including the Security Council.

Our Committee has always condemned the killing of innocent civilians, be they Palestinians or Israelis. It has also regretted, on many occasions, the lack of decisive action that has led to violations of international humanitarian law and the blocking of the resumption of substantive talks to find a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and of the principle of land for peace.

Once again, I should like to urge the Security Council to assume definitively its responsibilities in the attainment of international peace and security and to take the appropriate measures in a decisive way. As the Secretary-General suggested earlier, there must be a robust international presence in the region to guarantee the safety of both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. At the same time, there must be a concrete plan to realize the vision of two States within the borders drawn in 1967.

The need for a solution that would restore to the Palestinian people their rights — primarily the right to self-determination and sovereignty — while respecting the interests of the Israeli people is known to us all. The Arab States clearly supported that solution through the balanced peace initiative that they adopted at the Arab League Summit, held in Beirut in March. It is up to Israel to respond in good faith if it really wants peace.

History will judge us severely if we continue to shy away from our responsibilities and do not prevent the loss of more innocent lives and the increase in devastation and suffering, as well as the possibility of a much larger outburst of violence in the entire region. Our Committee can only warn of the dire consequences, in the hope that this time, there will be a prompt and adequate response.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of South Africa. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): The attack by the Israeli military on a residential Palestinian neighbourhood in Gaza deserves the strongest condemnation by the Council. The decision by the Israeli military to fire missiles from an F-16 jet into private homes can be described only as reckless and utterly inexcusable. The Israeli Government must have known that the impact of its bombs was going to kill and maim Palestinian civilians, including children. No explanation, no matter how comprehensive, can justify the use of the most destructive military weaponry in such circumstances, especially if the target was a single Palestinian.

This senseless act must be seen in the context of the systematic Israeli plans to dehumanize and dominate the Palestinian people. They include the destruction of the homes of the families of those accused of retaliatory attacks against Israel. There is even a threat to deport the families of anyone involved in such attacks.

We wish to remind the Council of its resolution 1402 (2002) of 30 March 2002, which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities. Instead, the Israeli army has reoccupied Palestinian cities and enforced severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods, thereby further aggravating the humanitarian crisis afflicting the Palestinian people.

We are particularly frustrated by the timing of this latest Israeli attack. It comes at a time when Israeli and Palestinian ministers had initiated a dialogue around concrete measures to de-escalate the security situation. This makes us wonder whether there are people who may be attempting to veto any peace-building initiative between the Israelis and Palestinians.

We wish to reiterate our support for the efforts of the "quartet", made up of the United States, the United Nations, the Russian Federation and the European Union, as well as other interested parties, in building an international consensus to reach, among other things, a two-State solution; the end of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory; the end of settlement construction and expansion; and the negotiation of a permanent settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The work of the "quartet" has been seriously undermined by this violence. The fact that Israel is also allowed to ignore Security Council resolutions cannot be helpful.

As we have stated many times before in the Council, it is our firm belief that there can be no peace in the Middle East as long as the Palestinian people do not have a State of their own, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We believe that the only solution lies in negotiations and not violence, whether it be Palestinian violence or Israeli violence.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Kuwait. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) *(spoke in Arabic)*: First of all, I should like to extend my great appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your distinguished role in guiding the Security Council this month. I should like also to thank Ambassador Wehbe of Syria for having led the work of the Council last month.

It is indeed deplorable that the Government of Israel is continuing to engage in inhuman practices and repeated violations of international humanitarian law against the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories, despite the international efforts made to consolidate stability and to put an end to the tragedy of the conflict in the Middle East, which has now assumed a very tragic dimension under critical and complex international conditions.

The aerial bombing carried out by Israel two days ago in the middle of the night took the lives of 15 martyrs, including those of nine children, injured more than 150 innocent civilians and destroyed many houses. It is clear evidence of the policy of collective punishment and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli forces against unarmed Palestinian civilians.

Israel's continued application of its systematic policy of destroying the infrastructure in the occupied Palestinian territories and its killing of innocent people is destroying the lives of the people of the region. Israel's imposition of a curfew further exacerbated the suffering of the people there. It did all of this under the pretext of preserving Israel's security and combating terrorism, even though it is actually Israel that created and nurtured terrorism throughout the region. Israel has continued its inhuman practices, resorting to indiscriminate violence against unarmed civilians.

Israel's violations of international humanitarian law continue, even after the entry into force of the International Criminal Court earlier this month. State terrorism by Israel falls within the mandate of the Court. The fact that Israel is making a mockery of the international community is a matter that should be taken up by the Court.

The political timing of that heinous operation and the use of combat aircraft to kill civilians, including women and children, shows the true nature of Israel's policy, which is to negate international efforts by the "quartet" and by the Arab countries to arrive at a comprehensive and just peace on the basis of implementation of international law, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Arab initiative approved at Beirut, the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace.

Kuwait fully supports the claims of the Palestinian people. Kuwait believes that the Council should shoulder its responsibilities and urge Israel to implement all the relevant resolutions of the Council as quickly as possible, with a view to lifting the blockade imposed by the Israeli forces on Palestinian towns and holy sites, as well as the siege on the legitimate Palestinian leaders, and to ensure that the Israeli Government complies with all the agreements concluded with the Palestinian Authority.

In this connection, we call on the "quartet" and the international community to continue their efforts to bring pressure to bear on Israel so that it will comply with the relevant resolutions and with international law.

In conclusion, let me say that we should emphasize the importance of the Security Council's following up the question of the conflict in the Middle East until a definitive solution is found that puts an end to Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the rest of Lebanese territory, and leads to the creation of a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, since any arrangement that does not include these particular measures would be a threat to peace throughout the region.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nambiar (India): Mr. President, we are grateful to you for convening this meeting at short notice following the sharp deterioration of the situation in the Middle East.

The attack launched by Israel late Monday night in the Gaza Strip has resulted in the loss of a large number of precious human lives and injury to hundreds. Most of the dead and injured were helpless and unarmed Palestinian civilians, including women and children.

In his statement of 22 July, the Secretary-General pointed out that

> "Israel has the legal and moral responsibility to take all measures to avoid the loss of innocent life; it clearly failed to do so in using a missile against an apartment building."

Even while we have noted the statement by Israel that this was a mistake, we cannot but strongly deplore this act of unwarranted violence and indiscriminate killings at a time when serious efforts are afoot to broker de-escalating actions between the concerned parties. We have in the past deplored the acts of violence perpetrated against Israeli civilians. In the present instance, we join other Member countries in calling upon Israel to conduct itself in a manner that is fully consistent with international humanitarian law.

It has been almost two years since the commencement of the current spiral of aggravated action and reaction in the conflict between Israel and Palestinians. Countless lives have been lost and many others broken by the loss of livelihood or of loved ones. All efforts to find a solution have been frustrated for one reason or another. We join our friends from the Arab Group in requesting the Security Council to call for necessary measures to bring an end to the current tragic situation. In the meantime, we are also faced with what Secretary-General Kofi Annan has referred to as a "threat of economic collapse and social destitution" looming over the occupied territories.

India believes it is time for the international community to act proactively to reduce the suffering and deprivation faced by the Palestinians. In this context, we support the Secretary-General's call for the parties to fully respect their international obligations as well as to facilitate the work of the United Nations and of other agencies.

It would seem from actions such as the Monday night attack that we are moving away from the vision of Israel and Palestine living peacefully as two States, side by side within secure and recognized boundaries. But such a slide back must not be allowed to happen. We reiterate our call for an immediate end to violence and the resumption of dialogue leading to a negotiated and permanent settlement of this question based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and as envisaged in resolution 1397 (2002). My Government attaches great importance to the ongoing efforts of the "quartet" and to the initiative of Saudi Arabia endorsed by the Arab League Summit at Beirut, aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me to begin by extending my delegation's congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of July. We are convinced that with your commitment and diplomatic skill, our deliberations will result in a positive outcome. I should also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to your distinguished predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Mikhail Wehbe, for his excellent leadership in presiding over the work of the Council last month.

Our meeting today is occasioned by another in a series of acts of aggression by Israel, this time the air attack that took place in the Gaza Strip. Fifteen people, including nine children, have reportedly been killed, and more than 100 others wounded. We condemn this brazen act which, from the perspective of international norms and values, represents a crime against humanity. The attack was also an obvious violation of international law and a betrayal of the ongoing peace process. Such a selfish attitude, again, represents the arrogant behaviour of the Israeli Government.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out, it is the legal and moral responsibility of Israel to take measures to avoid the loss of civilian lives. On the contrary, when using a missile in an indiscriminate assault against a civilian facility, loss of life might be the inevitable result, and indeed it was. Each of these attacks further exacerbates the grave humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people, and the latest attack is certain to make things much worse.

We call on Israel once again not to be blinded by its military might. There can be no military solution to this situation. We emphasize the need for the implementation of Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) in bringing this intolerable situation to an end. We further reiterate that only the realization of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure, internationally recognized borders, as provided for in resolution 1397 (2002), can end the perpetual violence in the occupied territories. We also support the ongoing international peace process based on Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of land for peace.

Finally, we once again stress the urgent need to deploy an international security force to protect innocent civilians in the conflict-ridden areas. We call on the Security Council to discharge its responsibility and to put an end to both Israeli aggression and its illegal occupation.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): A moment ago, I spoke in this debate as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. But given the seriousness of the issue that prompted the convening of this emergency meeting, Cuba cannot fail to state its national position.

The massacre by Israel of at least 15 innocent civilians, most of them children, in the Gaza Strip cannot be justified under any pretext and deserves the strongest condemnation.

Ariel Sharon's reaction to the tragic events, which he described as one of his greatest successes, needs no comment. In spite of everything, while the United

States and Israel are attempting to ignore the President of the Palestinian Authority, Sharon is still regarded as a valid partner in dialogue and is called "a man of peace", as President Bush described him to the astonishment of the world during the Jenin atrocities.

We reiterate that the United States must immediately suspend financial support for military purposes and supplies to Israel, which includes tanks, missiles and aircraft used against civilians, such as the F-16 that bombed Gaza.

It is a secret to no one that the Government of Israel's open defiance of the norms of international law and of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations is to a large extent a result of the indifference with which the Security Council continues to regard the question of Palestine. This is the result of one permanent member's arbitrary use of its power and prerogatives. With its vetoes and threats of veto, it prevents the Council from discharging its mandate.

The Security Council, through its inaction and passivity before the daily events in the occupied territories, bears a significant part of the responsibility for the tragic events in Gaza. If the Council continues to play this sorry and dangerous role, it will have to accept the consequences of its acts.

The countries of the Arab Group have prepared for this occasion a draft resolution which in our opinion reflects the minimum that the Security Council should say in the current circumstances. It is simply unacceptable that the Council should continue to turn its back on the suffering of the Palestinian people. Once again, Cuba calls on the Security Council to act without delay and to live up to its responsibilities.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Yemen. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Saidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We are confident of your wisdom and experience. Allow me to extend our congratulations to Ambassador Wehbe for the competent manner in which he conducted the work of the Council during the previous month.

Allow me also to express our appreciation for your prompt response, Sir, to our request to hold this meeting, which reflects the understanding and the appreciation of the Council regarding the horror of the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli attack was a flagrant violation of international law because it targeted a residential building. The Israeli Government was undoubtedly aware that attacking a residential building at midnight, when innocent children, women and elderly are sleeping, would lead to massive human casualties. Sharon has made a habit of adopting harsh and heavy-handed responses to abort all peaceful initiatives at a time when Palestinian factions have expressed willingness to put an end to all their suicidal operations in return for Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities and an end to the assassination of Palestinian leaders by the Israeli army. Sharon carried out the Gaza massacre to suppress any peace initiative or any glimpse of hope for peace with the Palestinians.

This was nothing new to us, because Sharon is accustomed to carrying out such atrocities whenever there are signs of agreement or understanding to strengthen the peace process. Sharon and his bloody history are proof of the fact that he has never wanted a peaceful settlement of the dispute because a peaceful settlement means Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories and the establishment of the Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. The horror of Sharon's policy became clear when he declared that the horrible crime committed in Gaza was, in his view, one of the most successful operations that Israel has achieved. We just ask ourselves if killing innocent children and destroying residential areas constitute success by any means.

The Republic of Yemen is a peace-loving country that strongly supports any peace process based on justice and respect for all international laws. Thus, we call on the Council to compel Israel to commit to withdrawing its forces immediately from the occupied territories and to putting an end to building settlements. We also call on the Council to send an international force to protect the Palestinian people from the brutality of Israeli forces. We emphasize the importance of implementing previous Council resolutions and call on Israel to respect the will of the international community by putting an end to all the horrors its forces are perpetrating against unarmed Palestinians and to respect human rights conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Peace cannot come to the Middle East through brutality and violence by the Israeli forces against unarmed Palestinian citizens. However, peace can be achieved through respect for the agreements concluded between the two sides, Israeli and Palestinian, implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and options based on the values of justice, negotiation and respect for the rights of others. Peace and security for Israel cannot be achieved without the establishment of the Palestinian State on its national land, with Holy Jerusalem as its capital, which is now an international position that we should all seek to accomplish so that comprehensive peace and justice will be achieved for all countries of the region.

The President: There are no more speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.05 p.m.